

## IN THE CONCRETE

By JOHN CHAMBERS.

Dr. Eli Sanborn, the neurologist, was, as usual, the center of the conversation at the club. He seldom put in an appearance, for, though he had partly retired from practice, his work was still heavy. There had been a discussion between him and Ellsworth, the scientist, upon the immortality of the soul.

"You won't find the soul in matter," Sanborn was saying.

"Doctor, the soul is matter," answered Ellsworth. "Read your Haeckel."

"A generation behind the times," responded the old doctor. "Science itself is turning toward the soul today."

"What function do you suppose the soul plays in life, then?" asked Ellsworth. "You know, a soul must do something, even in life, unless it is in a chrysalis condition."

"I should say its function was to sustain life," replied Sanborn. "Some people call it the guardian angel, you know. When a drunken man staggers across a crowded street without sustaining injury, when a child picks flowers on the edge of a cliff, I should say the soul is very active."

"I'll give you a concrete instance," he continued. "I practiced when a young man in one of those little old-fashioned villages along the Massachusetts coast, where everybody is related and knows his neighbor's history back for three or four generations. Those places contain some of the finest and sweetest characters in the world."

"Miss Prudence was one of these. Don't laugh at the old-fashioned name. Ellsworth, because she was a real person—may be today for all I know. She was one of the loveliest women, both in soul and body in Quontokset. I used to wonder what would happen to her if some real tragedy came into her life. Would she be crushed by it, or would her eyes be opened to the evil in the world and her relationship toward life be subtly altered thereby? It didn't seem possible to me that any evil could touch her."

"She was engaged, at about the age of twenty-five, to a worthless, dashing scamp of a fellow named Roach. He was just the kind of man that wins the heart of a girl like Miss Prudence. Everybody knew the shady things that he had done—or, rather, was capable

of, because at that time he hadn't been tried out in the furnace of life and found wanting. He got a position as assistant purser on one of the boats that ran then between Boston and New York. They had been engaged a year or more, and Roach had no intention of marrying Miss Prudence. Whatever his intentions may have been in the beginning, Miss Prudence was the dominant partner. Her sweetness, her confidence, so far from rendering her a victim to him, completely disarmed him.

"I believe he had tried to break off with her once or twice, but he couldn't do it. You see, when a woman believes implicitly in a man, he has a mighty hard task before him when he wants to play false with her—that is, if he has any decency in him at all. And Roach was not altogether bad."

"He was looking for his chance, and it came. The 'Sea Eagle' was wrecked off the Cape. About three-fourths of her passengers were saved, among them Roach, who, as a matter of fact, had jumped into a boat full of passengers. There was a good deal of confusion attending the getting away, and none of the people in Roach's boat knew who he was. He was posted as missing; he was supposed to have gone down with the ship."

"Miss Prudence shut herself up in her room when she received the news, and for two days saw nobody. When she reappeared she was quite composed. She put on black for the fellow, and her intimate friends knew how the blow had almost unhinged her reason, but she never displayed her grief in public."

"There was a young man named Horton who had been Miss Prudence's second-best beau in the old days. We had hoped that Horton and she would hit it off, but that scamp Roach came along with his dashing ways and snatched Miss Prudence away from the other man. Horton was slow—a fine fellow, and doing well in the employment of the local bank, but slow and simple, though as straight as a die. After a year had passed, and

Miss Prudence into her mourning aside, Horton wanted her to marry him. She turned him down. She said she esteemed him more than any man on earth, but could never marry. Her whole life would be devoted to the memory of Roach."

"A month or two after that time Horton was sent to New York upon some business connected with his bank. He was strolling through one of the parks there and saw Roach on a bench, looking shabby and dejected, but still, unmistakable. When he got over the shock he spoke to him."

"Roach was too much surprised to deny his identity. And so he explained. He had wanted to leave Quontokset, where he had no relatives or property. He had hated the idea of marriage. So he had taken advantage of the wreck to lose his identity and start a new life in New York. He pleaded that it was the only way to save Miss Prudence's feelings. No doubt she would marry somebody else, he said. He begged Horton not to betray him."

"Horton was slow and simple. He had given his promise before he realized what it would involve. It meant that he must let Miss Prudence live the rest of her life under the belief that Roach was dead. Then he wanted to thrash Roach; but he was torn between the conflicting ideas of duty, and meanwhile Roach slipped quietly away and was gone."

"Horton went back to his village. He decided that he could not break the girl's heart by letting her know. For three years he laid siege to her, but uselessly."

"Now, Ellsworth, I claim that the soul of Miss Prudence knew perfectly well what was happening, and loved Horton, and was trying its hardest to obliterate the false image of Roach without letting Miss Prudence know."

Ellsworth smiled incredulously. "Proceed," he said.

"Miss Prudence had to go to Boston on business. She had never left the village before. Horton was to escort her there and back, on the same day. By this time the two were like brother and sister."

"They reached Boston and had lunch together, transacted the business and started homeward, taking the elevated to the North station. Miss Prudence wanted the papers. They went to the paper and magazine booth, and there, behind the counter, stood Roach."

"The supreme moment had come. Horton did not know what to do. He stared at Roach, who had turned the color of chalk, and both were waiting for Miss Prudence to look up at Roach. She picked up one or two papers and a magazine, got her purse open, and stared full into Roach's face."

"Miss Prudence!" Roach burst out, and stopped again, for Miss Prudence's hand was lying placidly upon the counter, and she was staring right into Roach's eyes and never saw or heard him."

"Isn't it queer," she said to Horton, "that they leave all these papers and magazines around without anyone to sell them?"

She put down the money and walked away. Roach, of course, thought it was an elaborately staged 'cut.' He couldn't have understood Miss Prudence. But Horton did. He knew that, for her, Roach had been non-existent. There was no possibility of her playing a trick. It was not in her, and there was no quaver in her voice nor a shake of the hand as she sat down beside Horton in the train."

"Your theory is very ingenious," said Ellsworth, when the doctor had ended, "but those cases are well known to science. When one sustains a deep psychic wound the personality sometimes sloughs a part of itself away. We have those classic cases of double personality, for example, in which the patient is absolutely unable to recognize those whom he has known before, and sometimes to see them, even."

"Wait a minute," said the doctor. "On the way home Horton, who was greatly distressed, renewed his suit. He couldn't restrain himself; he was terrified, too, and wanted to have the right to take care of the girl. He asked her to marry him."

"Why, I have loved you all my life, dear," she answered. There wasn't the smallest hesitation on her part about accepting him. She remembered Roach, but she never remembered that she had been engaged to him. And it is my opinion that she would never even have seen him, had he stood up in front of her at any later date. Fortunately, she was not put to the test. Roach died in a hospital a year or two afterward."

"Well, Ellsworth," said the doctor, rising, "that is how Miss Prudence met evil, and it's no use your telling me there wasn't something that protected her from knowledge of evil, from madness, perhaps. Good night."

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Shakespearean Scholar, Henry Horman, famous, as a Shakespearean scholar, was born 100 years ago in Cornwall, Vt. He was a baker and subsequently a wheelwright, and was graduated from Middlebury college in 1840. During the next few years he taught school in Kentucky and Alabama. He then returned to New England to study theology. He was ordained a priest of the Protestant Episcopal church in 1850. The remainder of his life was spent in preaching, lecturing and literary work in Boston and vicinity. He was recognized as the foremost American authority in Shakespeare and his works. Between 1848 and 1881 Mr. Hudson's name was set to no less than 25 title pages either of original works or of edited plays of the immortal bard of Avon. Mr. Hudson died in Cambridge, Mass., January 16, 1886.



Never Saw or Heard Him.

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